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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
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FROM: Guatemala City

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 953, June 11, 4 p.m.

While situation in Guatemala remained outwardly calm during first 3 days of suspension of constitutional guarantees, the capital swarmed with rumors and press censorship prevented clarifications from reaching public.

Minister of Interior entrusted censorship functions to Office of Information and Publicity of Presidency headed by Carlos Gonzalez Orellana, reportedly pro-Communist. Five officials under supervision of fellow-traveling Raul Leiva were designated to do actual work of censoring. Censors eliminated any reference to person being arrested, taking asylum or fleeing country and any statements about Communists, particularly if connection with government implied, or about opposition activities.

Effects of censorship on local press were immediately apparent. NUESTRO DIARIO appeared on June 8 with its front page editorial column blank and with several other white spaces throughout edition. Independent press has avoided last minute disapprovals by eliminating controversial subjects. However, June 8 edition of provincial DIARIO DE QUEZALTENANGO carried full account of visit of unidentified aircraft which dropped propaganda previous evening (EMBTEL 920, June 8); apparently in establishing censorship this small paper was momentarily overlooked.

Under surface tension continued as reports that police are multiplying arrests continued. One newspaper man reported 300 arrested, but this is probably exaggerated. Among those picked up by police were Ernesto Berger, associated with liberal (extreme right) wing of anti-Communist movement; Juan Humberto Rocales, director of clerical weekly ACCION SOCIAL CRISTIANA; and Urbano Martinez, unknown to Embassy. Berger was released this morning and said he had not even been questioned. Miguel Mendoza, originally believed to have fled to San Salvador June 4 with brother Rodolfo (EMBTEL 910, June 7) is now in asylum in Salvadoran Embassy as is Juan Fermin Valadares, anti-Communist leader. First Secretary of Salvadoran Embassy said yesterday that 10 persons were currently in asylum at this Embassy. Efforts by reliable local reporter to verify rumor that 9 cadets at National Military Academy had disappeared and presumably defected

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defected to opposition drew statement from Col. Ernesto Paiz, commandant of school, that he knew nothing of matter and could say nothing. This was regarded as equivalent to confirmation.

On June 10, police issued official statement denying persistent rumor that 2 or more air force pilots had left country with their planes. Another version of this story was that 4 civilian members of Airo Club had fled abroad, but this is also unconfirmed.

On June 9, police searched anti-Communist headquarters here and confiscated considerable quantities of propaganda. Despite activity and attempted show of confidence, however, government officials remained uneasy and public continued to expect attempt to overthrow government.

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